

*Seeds for Celebration*  
*For the*  
**JUBILEE!** *Community*  
*Asheville, North Carolina*

*Winter, 2011*  
*Via Creativa*  
*Colors of the Wind*

## VIA CREATIVA: COLORS OF THE WIND

*Have you ever heard the wolf cry to the blue corn moon  
Or asked the grinning bobcat why he grinned?  
Can you sing with all the voices of the mountains?  
Can you paint with all the colors of the wind?  
(Stephen Schwartz, from "Pocahontas")*

OK, OK, it's a Disney song. But a damn good Disney song. Suck it up. "Colors of the Wind" is a Grammy-award winning song from the 1995 Disney film, "Pocahontas." It's one of many brilliant songs to come from the world of Disney. And like so many of Disney's themes, the song acknowledges, honors and celebrates the diversity of our planet and of life, in general.

I had a conversation recently with a woman who worked for NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration) (No wonder they have an acronym). I told her I pitied weather forecasters because everyone makes fun of them. She said that being a weather forecaster was a spiritual discipline. She said that it teaches you 1) you're never in control; 2) no one knows it all; 3) you'll never be happy if you take yourself too seriously. She also said, "Finally, weather is all about the jet streams."

Jet streams. Those narrow rivers of wind that ripple, swell, heave and undulate across the planet. Most of them are thousands of miles long, hundreds of miles wide and 1-3 miles deep. These jet streams scoot their windy butts around the globe at speeds of 50 - 400 mph. These sometimes wildly convulsive wind currents tote moisture, heat, cold and whatever industrial funk happens to be pluming into the skies. They transport Arctic chill to the Florida Keys, velvety tropical warmth to Canada, rain forest moisture and oxygen to deserts and can also deliver a jet plane to its destination in half - or twice - the normal flying time. Jet streams are the biggest air show in town.

*Ruach* is the Hebrew word for breath, wind and spirit. In Hebrew scriptures, *Ruach* is one of the names for God. One of the ways that The Holy One presents itself. In the first few words of Genesis, *Ruach* is pictured as blowing over the deep face of the waters - over the darkness and void. And whenever someone is "filled with the Spirit" - that's right: Jews were filled with the spirit long before evangelical Christians - the Hebrew word translates as "filled with *Ruach*." Filled with wind. So be careful who you call a "windbag."

Jesus was big on wind, as well. He counseled that if you want to get your cosmic act together, you need to be born of water and wind. Mama and *Ruach*. Or, *pneuma*, as the Greeks would have it. "You hear the sound of the wind," Jesus said. "Can't tell where it's coming from or where it's going. That's the way it is for people born of wind. Of spirit.

In the Qur'an, it's clear that Allah loves the wind as well. "The wind is a Blessing of Allah," says chapter 58. "Sometimes, it brings His Mercy and sometimes, it brings His Chastisement. When you experience it, do not revile it but beg of Allah, its good; and seek Allah's Refuge against its evil."

Whether wind is actually Spirit or simply an analogy for Spirit, it really doesn't matter. What does matter is remembering how differently wind comes to each of us. Simultaneously. 24/7. Depending on where we are on the globe and what day it is. Could a howling thunderstorm. Could be a gentle breath of a breeze. Could be dry and chilly. Could be warm, wet and stinky. Could be butt-crack cold or sauna-steamy hot. But it's all wind. All the same. All different manifestations of the same mysterious presence.

What if that's the way it is with Spirit? What if Spirit comes to each of us differently? At different times? In different places? Like colors of the rainbow, what if red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet are all manifestation of Spirit? We may see green, but others see indigo? We may see red, but others may not see anything at all. What if Spirit is truly jet-streaming its way across the globe even now, offering us each a teasing taste of different parts of this miraculous life?

This winter quarter we celebrate the Colors of the Wind; and how painting with more colors offers a richer picture of who we are and how to live well on this wind-blown beauty of a planet. Or, as Pocahontas sang it:

*You can own the Earth and still  
All you'll own is Earth until  
You can paint with all the colors of the wind.*

**VIA CREATIVA: COLORS OF THE WIND**  
**January 9, 2011 – THE COLOR OF CONNECTION**

Isaiah 42:1-7

*I have given you as a covenant to the people; a light to the nations.*

Sura 3:103-104

*Let there be a community of you who invite to what is good...*

Mark 1:4-11

*He saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.*

For all our whoop-de-doo about freedom – autonomy – lack of restrictions – independence – free choice and free will, it's our connections in life that make life possible. If yo' mama and daddy hadn't connected, Sweetcakes, you wouldn't be. That slithery umbilical link-up you had with Mama while floating in the world's most perfect waterbed... your first breath-filled, oxygen-inspired screech and squeal which hooked you up with trees, grasses and all kinds of growing things... the yummy taste of Mama's milkshake when your wailing mouth was silenced by her nipple... From the very first, it was our connections that kept us alive and gave us a visceral, tangible clue of what we needed to keep humpin' and bumpin'.

Nothing wrong with freedom, of course. Nothing wrong with self-determination. We love to operate under at least the illusion that we are our own boss. That we can by-God decide what our life is about. But without our indispensable links to food, water, clothing and shelter, freedom is indeed just another word for nothin' left to lose.

And physical connections are just the beginning. Our emotional, mental, social connections enable us to function in the world. Enable us to catch a glimpse of how life operates and be opened to the wonder of it all. Love, of course, is a profound connection. As is compassion. And forgiveness.

It's possible that our hook-ups are what permit us to un-hook. It may well be that the color of connection is what lights the path of freedom.

**VIA CREATIVA: COLORS OF THE WIND**  
**January 16, 2011 – THE COLOR OF A CALLING (King's Birthday)**

1 Samuel 3:1-10

*Here I am for you called me.*

Sura 28:2-7

*We shall restore him to you and shall invest him with a mission.*

John 1:43-51

*Come and see!*

Around these parts, when you hear someone say, "I was called," you can usually assume that the caller was understood to be God. For a lot of religious folks, it's the calling - and only the calling - that gets your butt moving in a holy direction. That puts you on the Inspirational Interstate, the Faithful Freeway, the Pious path, the Beatific Boulevard.

And maybe it is the province of the Divine to do all the calling. But, if you conceive of the Divine as imbedded in all things, then a case could be made that you could be called by boogers, baboons, Batman, bongos, bumblebees, Brigitte Bardot, bicuspid, blackberries or a big blue whale.

The word, "vocation" comes from the Latin, *vocare*, meaning "to call." According to those ancient Italian progenitors of pasta, anchovy and all things garlic, a true vocation comes from a calling of come sort. If you're called, it's a vocation. Otherwise, it's just a job.

Whether we're called by God, by our ancestors, by an old friend, by something saw on TV, by a childhood memory, a lover's passion or whether we're just called to dinner, it's a reminder that there's more going on than our tiny agenda.

The color of a calling may be the way the Holy One gets through to us without us having to feel religious even a little bit.

**VIA CREATIVA: COLORS OF THE WIND**  
**January 23, 2011 – THE COLOR OF CHANGE**  
**(Howard away)**

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

*God changed his/her mind.*

Sura 13:11

*Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.*

Mark 1: 14-20

*Repent!*

Bumper sticker wisdom teaches that 'Change is inevitable, except from vending machines.' But then again, even vending machines go through changes.

We are all mentally aware that change is going to happen. To us and to every diddle and doodle in this universe. Everything changes. We know it. We joke about it. We philosophize about it. We write papers and poems about. But

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when it happens, it always seem to throw us. Unless, of course, it's the kind of change we were hoping for. Changing from poverty to big bucks, from sad to happy, from parched to quenched, from ignored to loved are changes we can handle.

But, changes which don't appear to offer any benefit or good times, are usually viewed as pains in the butt. We know it's gonna happen; but we wish it wouldn't. And when it happens, we wish it hadn't.

You'd think that as aware as we are of the inevitability of change, that we'd be ready for it each and every moment. You'd think that when it happens, we'd shrug our shoulders and say, "Here we go again," rather than running frantically to therapists or friends or minister or whiskey in an effort to find assurance, drown our sorrows or make some sense of it all. And even when some initially terrifying change turns into a blessing, we still freak out when the next change bops into town.

If change is the way of life, then, perhaps it might behoove us to take a look at how we might hop on the bandwagon. The color of change may well be very close to the color of forgiveness or apology or even a simple acknowledgement that we don't know it all and might have been wrong.

## **VIA CREATIVA: COLORS OF THE WIND**

### **January 30, 2011 – THE COLOR OF WISDOM (Candlemas/Imbolc)**

#### **(Howard away)**

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

*The Lord your God will raise up a prophet...*

Sura 31:27

*If all the trees on the earth were pens, and all the sea were ink... the words of God would not be exhausted in the writing.*

Mark 1: 21-28

*What is this? A new teaching with authority.*

Wisdom is not just knowledge on steroids. Not a Smithsonian of facts, data and information. Not the product of obsessive/compulsive or deeply inspired learning or even intelligence. You can read all the books in the library of Congress and take every course that Harvard offers and still not achieve wisdom. Though we often rightly associate knowledge and wisdom, it could be argued that just as music school can sometimes teach the music out of you, so, knowledge can occasionally smack down your inborn wisdom. Nor does wisdom necessarily come with age. A ninety-year-old great-grand-mom can often bow to the wisdom of her 5-year old descendant.

The funny thing about wisdom is that it can be funny. Or tragic. It's not limited to the province of philosophers, theologians, artists, gurus, popes, scientists or even humans. Anyone who's ever walked drop-jawed through a redwood forest or snorkeled in wonder through a coral reef or snuggled a purring kitten or shook in awe at a thunderstorm or stood silently in a field of freshly fallen snow has more than likely sensed a profound wisdom around which words will always ineffectual. Some traditions claim that the flower of wisdom comes from the earth; and only because we are of the earth do we catch a fleeting breath of her fragrance.

The color of wisdom – wherever we see it - is gleaming reminder that there is far more going on than books can ever tell.

## **VIA CREATIVA: COLORS OF THE WIND**

### **February 6, 2011 – THE COLOR OF SUFFERING**

Job 7:1-7

*I am allotted months of emptiness...*

Sura 2:286

*...Burden us not with that which we have no ability to bear.*

Mark 1: 29-39

*At sundown they brought to him all who were sick...*

Most folks don't like suffering. Most people don't like to hurt. Other than a few nipple-piercing, nail-bed lounging, sleep depriving, relationship sabotaging, Brazilian waxing masochists, the majority of humans and other mammals don't really get off on misery. But we all go through it. Every last one of us.

Money can't keep us from it. Religion can't divert it. Lovers can't reroute it. In fact, it could be argued that money, religion and lovers occasionally contribute to our wretchedness. Therapists, whiskey, self-help videos or weekend workshops with Indian gurus can't make it go away. Suffering is part of the kit. Comes with the package. Installed at the factory. You can believe till you're blue in the face that misery is optional. But, as far as we know, every human inevitably exercises that option.

And maybe looking for suffering's silver lining is nothing but the practice of a Pious Pollyanna. But, now and again, suffering does instruct. It teaches us that none of us are excused. None of us have been hand-picked by the gods not to suffer. Agony levels the playing field and reminds us that only 1 6 billionth of this is about me. And in that way, if we are open, the color of suffering illuminates our commonality with all of life. It reminds us of the suffering of others and might just nudge us in the direction of compassion and justice.

If misery does indeed love company, it might also be true that misery reminds us that we have company. A whole world of it.

**VIA CREATIVA: COLORS OF THE WIND**  
**February 13, 2011 – THE COLOR OF SIMPLICITY**  
**(Howard away)**

2 Kings 5:1-14

*...all he said to you was wash and be clean.*

Sura 6:141

*Eat from their fruits, and give the due alms on the day of harvest, and do not waste anything.*

Mark 1: 40-45

*Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand.*

Don't you find it interesting that in this neck of the cultural woods, we encourage each other to "simplify?" To learn the beauty of simple living? "'Tis the gift to be simple," we sing. At the same time, we call someone who we consider deficient in education, intelligence or good judgment, "simpleton." Or "simple-minded." It seems that we are all about simple living as long as we go about it shrewdly, cleverly with a college degree or two. Thoreau, yes. Hippie tree-hugger, no.

Simplicity, of course, has less to do with external factors and more to do with the inner workings. Less to do with amounts of money or education and more to do with attitudes about money and education. Less about chatter or silence, struggle or calm, work or vacation; and more about feelings, thoughts, mindsets.

Finally, simplicity comes or goes depending upon what we think is important and how we honor that importance. What we consider to be essential, crucial, the key to living and how we live with that crucial and essential key. Jazz trumpeter, Maynard Ferguson, was fond of saying, "Music is far too important to me to take it seriously." It might just be that a sweet smidge of simplicity could plop on your plate when you love life so deeply that you have to laugh at yourself and the world around you on a regular basis.

**VIA CREATIVA: COLORS OF THE WIND**  
**February 20, 2011 – THE COLOR OF TRUST**

Isaiah 43: 18-25

*I will make a way in the wilderness...*

Sura 49:8-9

*God has endeared the Faith to you, and has made it beautiful in your hearts.*

Mark 2: 1-12

*When he saw their faith...*

Trust offers no guarantees. No promises. No warranties or assurances. You can trust your banker, trust your lover, trust your teenager or trust your GPS. You can trust in the Lord, trust the process, trust the future, trust the president, trust in the goodness of people or trust no one. You can trust your judgment, trust your condom, trust your dog, trust your therapist or trust your nose when you pop open that long-forgotten Tupperware from the back of the fridge. But not matter what or whom you trust, there is no rock-solid reassurance that your trust will be ever honored. No warranties. No money-back or time-energy-back guarantees when it comes to trust.

Trust is one of those dang faith-things. Can't prove it. Can't verify or confirm it. Can't see it under a microscope or grow it in Petri dish. A case could be made that trust, like beauty, exists only in the eye and mind of the beholder.

More than anything, faith is a connection. A link between you and what- or whoever you trust. Trusting someone doesn't necessarily mean they trust you. Trust is not always reciprocal. When you trust, you're on your own. When you trust, you go out on a kind of limb that could snap at any time and dump your sweet butt in a painful pile. A broken trust can make you look and feel stupid.

Without trust, however, adventure is impossible. Or love. Or loyalty. Without trust, life can become more of a rut than a ritual. More fear, less discovery. More reticence, less openness. The color of trust lights your way to place – however fragile – where anything is possible.

**VIA CREATIVA: COLORS OF THE WIND**  
**February 27, 2011 – THE COLOR OF PLEASURE**

Hosea 2: 14-16

*I will now allure her, bring her into the wilderness and speak tenderly...*

Sura 16:68-69

*From the bee's belly comes forth a syrup of different hues, a cure for men.*

Mark 2: 18-22

*The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them.*

In her book, Sacred Pleasure, Riane Eisler reminds us that flowers, music and candlelight in our culture, are found together mostly in two places: lovers' tables and altar tables. Flowers, music and candlelight are the province of romance and ritual. As if to say, there could be a connection. A connection which we have sadly lost in our world today.

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Traditionally, we tend to think of religion and pleasure like oil and water. Yin and yang. Anchovies and ice cream. Jews and Arabs. Republicans and democrats. Lady Gaga and Laura Bush. Pleasure and religion seldom dance together or are even found in the same sentence. However, though most folks might not describe religion as pleasurable, there are many who are religious about their pleasure.

Be that as it may, we all know the value of pleasure – the joy and delight, relief and release it offers. Could be that's why the 10 commandments make it clear that on the Sabbath, the Holy Day, there is to be no labor or effort of any kind. Just kick back and chill time. Just personal pleasure.

Maybe pleasure is more holy than we think. Maybe the color of pleasure paints the walls of our souls with a tint that makes the Holy feel welcome.

## **VIA CREATIVA: COLORS OF THE WIND**

### **March 6, 2011 - THE COLOR OF MYSTERY**

2 Kings 2:1-12a

*Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven.*

Sura 6:59

*With Him are the keys to all secrets; none knows them except He.*

Mark 9: 2-9

*He did not know what to say for he was terrified.*

In the New York Times recently, there was an article about British mathematician, Roger Penrose who has co-authored a paper with physicist, V.G. Gurzadyan, describing physical evidence that may predate the Big Bang. The paper describes a pattern of concentric circles that may be gravitational waves generated by collisions of "superbig black holes before the Big Bang."

Our universe, they claim may be simply one link in a chain of universes, beginning and ending in a way that sends gravitational waves into the next universe. There might, according to this theory, be an infinite number of co-existing, but undetectable, universes.

The NYT article concludes with the question, "What do we do with these possibilities? Our answer," writes the author, "is to marvel at them and be reminded, once again, that we live in a universe - however we define it – that contains more wonders than we can begin to imagine."

The color of mystery is splattered and spread over everything within us and without. The color of mystery may be God's favorite color.

## **ASH WEDNESDAY**

### **March 9, 2011**

## **VIA CREATIVA: COLORS OF THE WIND**

### **March 13, 2011 – THE COLOR OF SACRIFICE (Lent begins)**

Genesis 22:1-18

*Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son.*

Sura 22:37-38

*It is not the flesh and blood of your sacrifice that pleases God.*

Mark 1:12-13

*And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.*

The word "emunction" is a genuine word meaning "the act of removing obstructions from bodily passages." "Dactylion" is an anatomical name for the tip of the middle finger. You might not have known these words. But you do know the word "sacrifice." However, when it comes to words commonly used in daily conversation, the word, "sacrifice" is almost – but not quite - up there with emunction and dactylion.

Though we have nothing necessarily against the idea of sacrifice, it's not something we like to dwell on. We talk about soldiers sacrificing for their country. We talk about parents sacrificing for their children. We may mention sacrificing dessert so we might knock off those extra 15 pounds riding around on our butt. We may agree that sacrifice can be a good thing; but, if given the choice, we'd rather not put it into practice. Hey honey, what do you want to do tonight? Wanna go do a little sacrificing?

Sacrifice is mostly associated with religion. Many religions teach that giving up something important to you for a greater good is a holy act. Offering up something significant from your life is a way making connection with The Holy. Linking up with the Spirit of Life. The color of sacrifice may not be pleasant to look at. May not be how you decorate for a party. But it's a color that does, indeed, remind us that there are realities more important than the things we consider important.

**VIA CREATIVA: COLORS OF THE WIND**

**March 20, 2011 – THE COLOR OF ASSURANCE**

Genesis 28: 10-17

*Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go.*

Sura 2:153-157

*Surely we are Allah's and to Him we shall surely return.*

Mark 8:31-37

*...those who lose their life for the sake of the good news will save it.*

Bumper sticker wisdom says, "The most important things in life aren't things." Sure. Easy for bumper stickers to say. Bumper stickers don't have to pay rent. Or eat. Bumper stickers never buy gas for that car they ride around on. If you're a bumper sticker, who needs health insurance? Or movie money? Or toilet paper? You gotta admit, when it comes to bumper stickers, their initials say it all.

But, then again, when it comes to the important things in life, you gotta acknowledge that love trumps big screen TV's. Forgiveness beats new tires for the car. Compassion wipes the floor with fancy shoes. Beauty, joy, pleasure, companionship, laughter, singing, hugs, memories and a good b.m. are just a few of the non-things that make our travels around the sun worth the ride. Sure, we need some thing-things to get by; but it's the non-thing-things that goose our souls and keep a smile on our faces.

Assurance is one of those non-things. Like beauty and laughter, assurance can't be bought, sold or nailed down. There's no guarantee that assurance will ask you to dance when you're feeling like life's wallflower. But, sooner or later, one way or the other, assurance does sashay her sweet self into our living rooms, seats herself right up close and lets us know – often without even a word – that every little thing gonna be all right. And that – B.S. wisdom or not – is one of the most important things we got going.